

# *consider* Sentences Reconsidered in the Light of Greek Evidence

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## ABSTRACT

English sentences such as *I consider John smart* have long presented analytic ambiguity between a “small clause” analysis and a “predication” analysis, and the apparently equivalent sentence-type in Greek, e.g. θεωρώ τον Γιώanni έξυπνο presents similar problems. Here it is argued that additional evidence from each language, involving constructions that are sensitive to the thematicity of an object NP, shows that these superficially similar sentences are actually best treated as being structurally quite different, with a small clause analysis working better for Greek, and a predication analysis for English, based on these further facts.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is often the case that doing contrastive analysis and comparative syntax can uncover strikingly similar sentence patterns between different languages. These patterns in turn then present an analytic challenge to the linguist to determine just how similar they really are. There are potential pitfalls, however, since superficial similarity can just as often turn out to be a mirage, masking deeper differences between the ostensibly parallel structures.

A case in point is offered by some sentences in English and Modern Greek. In particular, both languages have reduced clause-like complements with the verb ‘consider’ that are seemingly identical in structure; examples are given in (1):

- (1) a. I consider John smart  
= b. (εγώ) θεωρώ τον Γιώanni έξυπνο  
I/NOM consider/1SG the-John/ACC smart/ACC.MASC.SG  
‘I consider John smart’.

These sentences show some similarities: in each, there is a verb meaning ‘consider’ followed by a noun phrase in the accusative case, followed by adjective predicated of the NP. Even though English noun phrases do not generally show case distinctions, pronouns do show case overtly: *I consider him/\*he smart*.

There are differences evident in the two structures, but they are attributable to regular differences between the languages. The overt case-marking on the adjective in Greek is a regular feature of Greek syntax that is not found in English; similarly, the usual absence of the subject in the Greek sentence is in keeping with the fact that Greek is for the most part a pro-Drop language, whereas the usual presence of the subject pronoun in the English version is in keeping with the general status of English as a non-pro-Drop language (but see Joseph 1994 for a lexically relativized view of pro-Drop in both Greek and English).

The relevant structures to be considered here are the reduced ones with *consider/θεωρώ*, not the fuller structures with these verbs, with a full complement clause, illustrated in (2) for English and (3) for Greek:

- (2) a. I consider that John is smart  
b. I consider John to be smart
- (3) a. θεωρώ πως ο Γιώannis είναι έξυπνος  
consider/1SG COMP the-John/ACC is/3SG smart/NOM.MASC.SG  
‘I consider that John is smart’  
b. θεωρώ τον Γιώanni πως είναι έξυπνος

consider/1SG the-John/ACC COMP is/3SG smart/NOM.MASC.SG  
'I consider John to be smart' (literally: "I consider John that (he) is smart")

The reduced structures in (1) have given rise to competing analyses, one, associated with the work of Stowell (1981, 1983), in which the NP - AP is considered to be a "small clause" complement to the main verb *consider*, as in (4a), and one, associated with the work of Williams (1980, 1983), in which the NP is directly governed by the verb, and the AP serves as a predicate to that NP, as in (4b):

- (4) a. [... consider [ John smart ] ] (Small Clause)  
b. [... consider [ John ] [ smart ] ] (Predication)

There are of course variations on these analyses (see, for instance, the papers in Cardinaletti & Guasti 1995 for some discussion, and Tsokoglou 1997 for application of some analyses to Greek itself), but the possibilities in (4) represent the basic approaches taken to the issue of how to account for these reduced 'consider'-sentences, and thus constitute the point of departure for the discussion here.

## 2. SOME "DEEPER" DIFFERENCES — STATUS OF POST-VERBAL NP

It is my contention here that despite the superficial similarity evident in these sentence-types in Greek and English, there are significant differences between them, focusing on the status of the post-verbal NP (*John/τον Τώτση* in (1)). In particular, it turns out that each language has a syntactic phenomenon that is sensitive to the thematic/nonthematic status of the post-verbal NP (where "thematic/nonthematic" refers to what in 'traditional' transformational grammar was "underlying" vs. "nonunderlying" object status), and further that in English the post-verbal NP in (1a) structures behaves like a thematic object, whereas the corresponding NP in Greek (1b) structures behaves like a nonthematic object.

These facts thus present a puzzle and a methodological worry — why should Greek and English differ in this way and what methodological lessons are to be drawn from these differences? There may not be any answers, but documenting the differences between Greek and English proves to be an interesting exercise in and of itself.

## 3. THE RELEVANT ENGLISH FACTS

The relevant facts from English concern the so-called "Tough Movement" construction, however it is to be analyzed (i.e. as movement, deletion, interpretation, etc.). In particular, based on sentences such as those in (5), where "*e*" stands for the site corresponding to the "tough-Moved" NP, the subject of the matrix "tough" predicate:

- (5) a. \*Mary is easy to give *e* presents (vs. OK: Mary is easy to give presents to *e*)  
b. \*John is hard to believe *e* to have committed that crime

Berman 1973 proposed a constraint on Tough Movement which she stated as: "Tough movement may move a noun phrase only from its position in underlying structure".

Assuming basis for the statement of this constraint is accurate — note that the facts in (5) are generally agreed upon and thus must be accounted for somehow — and focusing just on immediately post-verbal NPs as the "target" of Tough Movement (i.e. ignoring Tough Movement of prepositional objects as in *John is easy to get along with e*), Berman's constraint can be recast into more current terms as:

- (6) \*TM where "target" of TM is a nonthematic immediately postverbal NP (object).

The sentences and constraint in (5) and (6) are relevant for the analysis of (1a), since it is generally agreed that Tough Movement can apply to the structure in (1a), and yield a grammatical sentence such as (7):

- (7) John is easy to consider smart.

The acceptability of (7), given the constraint in (6), thus constitutes evidence for *John* in (1a) as a thematic object of *consider*. This result proves to be at odds with what emerges from a consideration of certain facts about the Greek structure in (1b).

#### 4. THE RELEVANT GREEK FACTS

The Greek construction in question that serves as a diagnostic bearing on the analysis of reduced *consider* structures is the possibility of expressing reflexivization linking some nominal in coreference with the subject through the use of non-active voice verbal morphology, i.e. the forms characterized by the set of person and number endings that includes the first person singular ending *-μαι*, second person singular *-σαι*, etc., the punctual past suffix *-θηκ-*, and so on. Thus a verbal form such as *χτυπιέμαι* can mean ‘I am hitting myself’. Such forms can also have a passive interpretation, e.g. ‘I am being hit (by someone)’, and some plural forms also allow for a reciprocal interpretation. Still, this morphological reflexive is a verbal construction that needs to be accounted for. As a reflexivization strategy, it is distinct from, though roughly synonymous with, the one which uses the reflexive nominal *τον εαυτό* with the possessive pronoun, as in (8):

- (8) χτυπώ τον εαυτό μου  
hit/1SG.ACT the-self/ACC my  
‘I am hitting myself’.

The morphological Reflexive in Greek is subject to a constraint to the effect that only NPs that are thematic direct objects can be linked with coreferent subjects in this Reflexive construction; no such constraint holds on the nominal Reflexive type with *τον εαυτό*. The need for such a constraint is shown by two constructions in which a post-verbal object is nonthematic as a direct object and is unable to participate in a linkage with a subject in the morphological Reflexive.

For instance, in a “Dative Shift” construction, as illustrated in (9), the notional indirect object can occur post-verbally in the accusative case as an ostensible direct object, as in (9b), yet, as (9c) shows, the post-verbal indirect object is unavailable as far as the morphological Reflexive is concerned, for (9c) can only have a passive reading and not a reflexive reading:

- (9) a. διδάσκω γραμματική σ τον Γιάννη  
teach/1SG.ACT grammar/ACC to the-John/ACC  
‘I teach grammar to John’  
b. διδάσκω τον Γιάννη γραμματική  
teach/1SG.ACT the-John/ACC grammar/ACC  
‘I teach John grammar’  
c. ο Γιάννης διδάσκεται γραμματική  
the-John/NOM teach/3SG.NON-ACT grammar/ACC  
‘John is taught grammar’ / \*‘John teaches himself grammar’.

Also, the post-verbal accusative object in the full complement structure with *θεωρώ* ‘consider’, as in (3b) above, is a nonthematic object, as the parallel with nominative NPs, as in (3a) above, suggests, and it is inaccessible to the morphological Reflexive type, though they do allow passive readings; these claims are illustrated in (10):

- (10) a. θεωρώ τον Γιάννη πως είναι γενναίος  
consider/1SG.ACT the-John/ACC COMP is/3SG brave/NOM.SG  
‘I consider John to be brave’  
b. ο Γιάννης θεωρείται πως είναι γενναίος  
the-John/NOM consider/3SG.NON-ACT COMP is/3SG brave/NOM.SG  
‘John is considered to be brave’ / \*‘John considers himself to be brave’

By contrast, a structure that is superficially parallel to (10a) but which involves a thematic post-verbal object, namely the complementation with the verb πείθω ‘persuade’, as in (11a), allows a reflexive reading with the non-active form of πείθω, as shown in (11b); admittedly, this judgment is somewhat subtle and is not shared by all Greek speakers, but it does hold for at least some:

- (11) a. έπεισα τον Γιωαννή πως είναι γενναίος  
persuaded/1SG the-John/ACC COMP is/3SG brave/NOM.SG  
‘I persuaded John that he is brave’  
b. ο Γιάννης πείστηκε πως είναι γενναίος  
the-John/NOM persuaded/3SG.NON-ACT COMP is/3SG brave/NOM.SG  
‘John persuaded himself that he is brave’.

The relevance of the constraint evident in (9) through (11) for analysis of the reduced *consider* sentences in Greek comes from the fact that a morphological Reflexive based on the structure of (1b) is ungrammatical; that is, for (12):

- (12) ο Γιάννης θεωρείται έξυπνος  
the-John/NOM consider/3SG.NON-ACT smart/NOM.SG

there is available only a passive reading ‘John is considered smart’, and not a reflexive interpretation, ‘\*John considers himself smart’. Given the constraint on the morphological reflexive, (12) constitutes evidence for τον Γιάννη in (1b) as a nonthematic object of θεωρώ, a result that is directly opposite to the one reached for English, based on the facts discussed in section 3.

It is true, as Angeliki Tsokoglou (personal communication) has noted, that nonactive forms of θεωρώ do not permit a reflexive reading in the nonactive under any circumstances, i.e., the verb does not have the physical sense interpretation that English *consider* can (as in *I considered my face in the mirror*); nonetheless, given that θεωρώ can in fact occur in the nominal reflexive construction, as in (13):

- (13) θεωρώ τον εαυτό μου έξυπνο  
consider/1SG the-self/ACC my smart/ACC.SG  
‘I consider myself smart’

there can be no semantic reason for the failure of nonactive θεωρώ to show a reflexive interpretation. Moreover, since nonactive forms occur, although with a passive reading, there is no morphological reason for the absence of a reflexive reading of nonactive θεωρώ. It may thus be concluded that some account is needed for the facts in (12), and generalizing from the facts in (9) to (11) provides a systematic syntactic account for the behavior of the reduced complement structure with θεωρώ with respect to the morphological reflexive strategy.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This discussion has brought to light a striking difference between structures in Greek and in English that are ostensibly quite parallel, especially when viewed strictly superficially. The difference between the two languages in the thematicity of the post-verbal object in reduced *consider* sentences suggests a structural difference. In particular, the evidence presented here is consistent with a small clause structure (4a) for Greek, because the post-verbal NP is not so tightly linked to the main verb in a small clause analysis; that NP would thus be unavailable as far as the morphological reflexive construction is concerned. On the other hand, a predication structure, as in (4b), is indicated for English, because the post-verbal NP is the immediate sister of the verb in the predication analysis and would thus be available for Tough Movement.

Moreover, there may well be other differences between English and Greek with these reduced *consider* sentences. As Peter Öhl has remarked (personal communication), the whole post-θεωρώ complement can topicalized, as shown in (14a), whereas the corresponding sentence-type in English is quite ungrammatical, as the gloss for (14a), presented in (14b) indicates:

- (14) a. τον Γιώργη έξυπνο, κάμενος δεν το θεωρεί.  
           the-John/ACC smart/ACC.SG no-one/NOM NEG it/ACC consider/3SG.NON-ACT  
       b. \*John smart, no one considers (it)

It would follow, therefore, that there is no single analysis in Universal Grammar for ‘consider’-NP-AP sentences that will hold for all languages. Indeed, it seems that even a single language may show both possibilities, for in addition to the evidence presented above that the post-verbal object in the English sentences in question is thematic, based on their behavior in the Tough Movement construction, there are sentences such as (15) in which a expletive noun phrase, generally held to be nonthematic, occurs as the post-*consider* object:

- (15) a. I consider it hot out today.  
       b. I consider it likely that Robin will win.

What remains to be determined is whether the difference between English and Greek documented here follows from some other property that differentiates the two languages. An obvious factor to consider is that Greek verbs assign morphological case to their objects, and thus that verbs plus a following nominal could be interpreted to form a tighter grouping in Greek than in English. While this might play a role, there are nonetheless ways in which object nominals are tightly bound to a governing verb even in English (e.g. \**I saw momentarily John*, where an intervening adverb leads to ungrammaticality), rendering this factor a less promising avenue to explore.

Perhaps the clearest and safest conclusion to draw here is a methodological lesson. The difference between Greek and English discussed here emerges only in a somewhat subtle way; that is, it is not immediately evident from a consideration of the primary manifestation of these structures but only instead comes out indirectly from the way these structures behave in less directly observable constructions. It is therefore important not to base comparative claims simply on superficial comparisons of ostensibly parallel sentences, since what is ostensible may not be sustainable under closer scrutiny.

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